

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

OCTOBER, 1975.

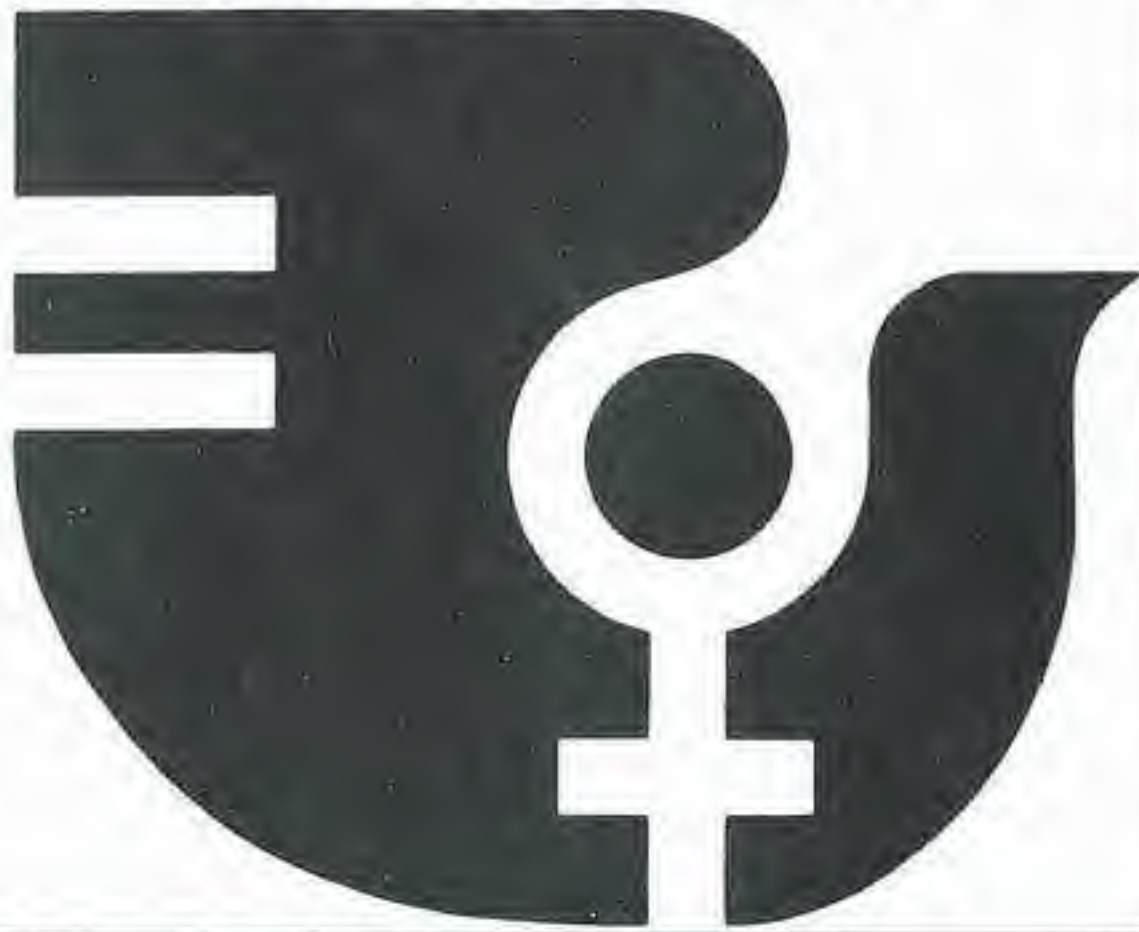
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VOL. 4. NO. 10.

**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

"That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ..." James Connolly

FAMILY PLANNING DEVELOPMENTS

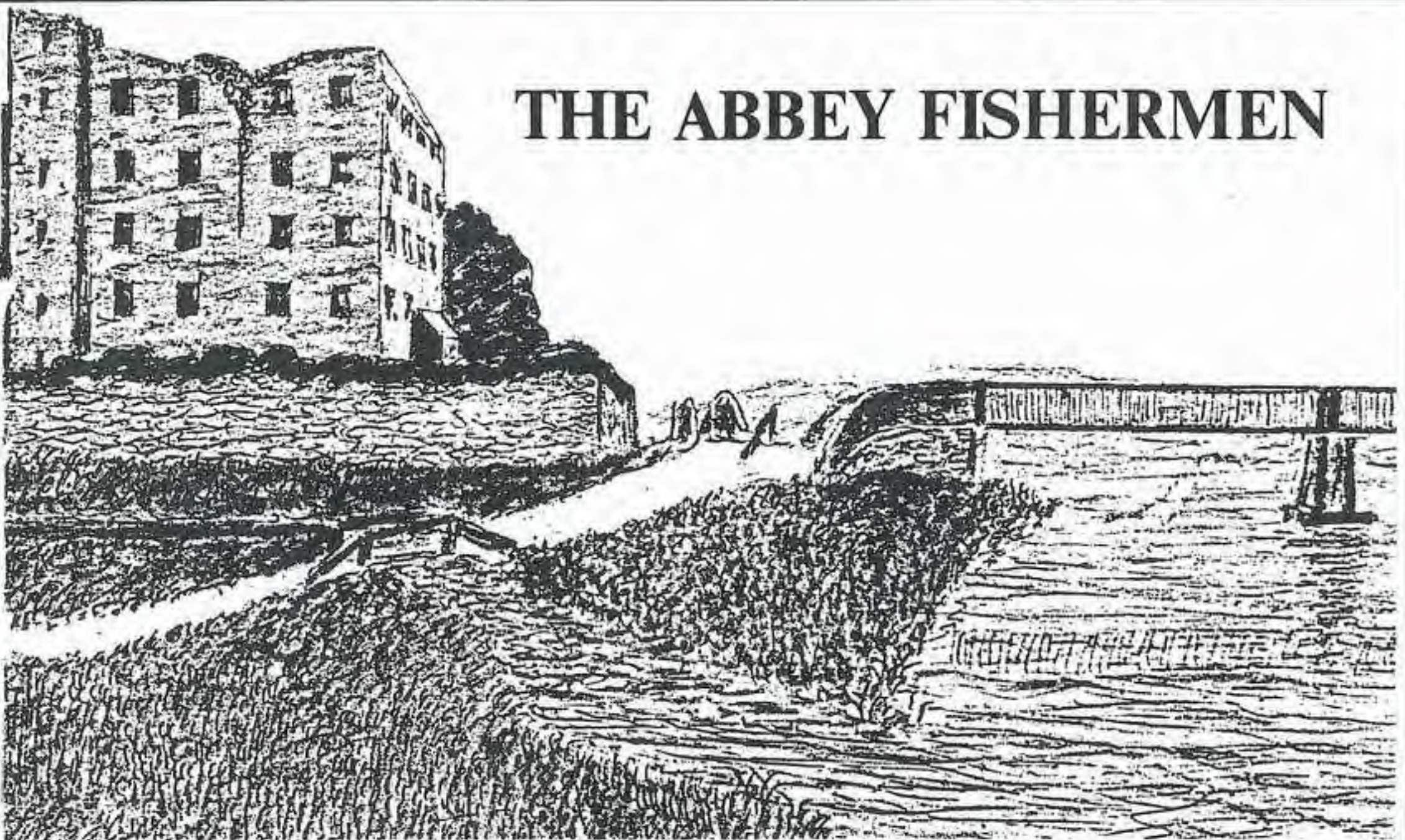


THE FOURTH SIEGE OF LIMERICK



P.J. ("Cushy") Ryan

THE ABBEY FISHERMEN



Plassy Mill

SHALL WE DAUNCE?

BY DERMOT McEVOY

IT IS only a year since I returned to Ireland from exile; it seems a lifetime. I am tempted to make my first annual report as terse and dismissive as that of Reginald Maudling who, as British Home Secretary with responsibility for Northern Ireland Affairs, said as he boarded the aircraft taking him back to mainland U.K.: "What a bloody country! Gimme a large whiskey!"

But it has not all been disappointment; I've made many new friends, not least in Limerick, and their friendship counts for a great deal in the general bleakness; indeed, they more than compensate for the cold shoulder I am offered by those who welcomed me back in the hope I'd be a pliant publicist of their cure-alls which, boiled down, mean: "Keep me in office and everything will be all right". No sir. I am more convinced than ever that Ireland needs to be turned upside down before we're even half-way to a just society. Don't scream what can we do, just get off your backsides, jolt the establishment. Limerick has made a start with this paper. It costs you less than a third of the price of a pint, a tenth of the price of a dance ticket, so buy an extra copy of the *Limerick Socialist* off a friend (or an enemy for that matter). Ask for it at Eason's and, if they haven't got it, ask why and suggest to the manager he might make room for it even among the soft pornography that young Limerick browses over. (Incidentally, the manager of Eason's is not unreceptive of suggestions. You will remember I complained of being charged 11p for the *London Times* when it is 10p at Eason's in Dublin. Well, it is 10p in Limerick now. Congratulate the manager on my behalf, if you think of it).

AT A meeting in Limerick to help the unfortunate Chilean refugees I was greeted by an alert young housewife (alert, and why not with an Inland Revenue background like myself) who, with an air of triumph, said, "I bet you haven't noticed that the Fianna Fail Councillor's 40p rabbit you wrote about is now 50p". She seemed a bit disappointed when I was able to tell her that not only had I noticed the 25 per cent rise but that the word "Trapped" was on the showcard in the window. The rise to 50p, just like all the other price rises, is perfectly legal; it is only wages that must not rise in a country that is pitiless to its poor and weak. Who ordains that? Why, the Cosgrave-Corish condominium and there's barely a squawk from the Press, none from the pulpit.

But, if there's no way I can stop the rabbitman from overcharging, there is a way I can get at him: The trapping of rabbits (not of customers, mind you) is illegal. So is the sale of trapped rabbits, just like the sale of salmon and pheasants that are poached. Perhaps you will now draw the attention of the Limerick branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to this breach of the law? You might even tell Chief Supt. Thomas Kenny on the reasonable ground that men who sing dumb over charges of beating-up human beings in his barracks may very well be kind to rabbits. Guards, who were vigilant in protecting donkeys from cruelty, used in my time in the West be presented with walking sticks by the NSPCA, but since they do not walk their beats any more and may be tempted to use the walking sticks on the subjects of their 17-hour interrogations, I shall not leave a walking stick.

BY THE way, on the subject of drinking, does Limerick do much else? (This reminds me of 'Gallopers' Smith — later Lord Birkenhead — questioning a cantankerous witness: "Your drink a lot, Mr. X?" and getting the reply, "That's my business" and Gallopers' next question: "Have you any other business?"). What prompts my question is seeing a mass of

teenagers, girls and boys, falling drunk and breaking glasses the other weekend at a city hotel — during an after hours' extension.

In a way how can you blame them: they've nowhere else to go, not a decent club for discussions, theatricals, dancing, table-tennis, chess and bridge. Take it from me, alcoholics begin early. Worse — if anything can be worse — such youngsters, faced with a cut off of jobs and money in the economic blizzard ahead, will be easy victims of populists of Right and Left crying out for a coloured-shirt dictator with *his* remedy. After all, Hitler recruited his Brown Shirts from the unemployed in the beer-halls.

That Saturday night in the same hotel there was a dance in the ballroom on the half-landing above the low-ceilinged, stifling bar. I tried the ballroom door and found it locked. I asked an hotel porter the reason. To keep those bar-youngsters out, he replied. But how do the dancers get out in case of fire, I asked. There's another door, he told me. And if that were jammed in the panic that's certain in case of fire? — but the porter had left. May I suggest that while Limerick is waiting for the men and equipment asked of the City Council by the Fire Brigade Chief Mr. Michael Walsh someone should make it his business to see that all ballrooms have exits — unlocked? A porter on the door might keep the drunks out.

Or perhaps someone should tell Mr. Walsh about Drumcollogher. It will be just that little bit late to do anything about this scandal after a mass funeral of Limerick youth. Or is Limerick youth to be left to the care of bars and ballrooms? Riddle me that, me Munchin's scholar!

AS IF we cannot generate enough trouble among ourselves I see that a bunch of foreign no-goods are responsible for four Fianna Fail TDs being among 27 people fined for drinking at 1 a.m. in an Ennis pub. The casual reader of the *Echo* may think that they were in the pub for drinking purposes. Not so! Sylvie Barrett was able to tell District Justice Gordon Hurley (presumably on the New Testament) that he had organised a seminar on EEC affairs, that some of his foreign guests had asked whether they might go to a licensed premises and that he had felt compelled to take them. *Noblesse oblige*.

But why a publichouse — especially when the former Minister of Justice, assuming he was in a condition to do so, could readily have told this hard-working bunch of EEC-lovers that what was proposed was against the law. After all, a dairy is a licensed premises, so's a tobacconist's, and wouldn't a visit to either have satisfied any foreigner's curiosity about how the natives disport themselves at one o'clock in the morning? Wasn't the Oddfellows' Club functioning. If not, Ennis is on the downgrade.

Yet all's well that ends well. District Justice Hurley, who many people think owes his appointment to Fianna Fail wheeler-dealers like the late Jack Degnan and Paddy Con McMahon, thanked Deputy Barrett for his "explanation" and fined everybody £1. By the way, I am unreliably informed that the intrepid Garda involved in the case has a girl friend in Belmullet, so the obvious transfer will be no hardship. Of course, he might be sent to Kilmihil, "half the size of a graveyard and twice as dead", where the only "life" is on Wednesdays when the main street is jammed with motor cars as the Poor Law farmers roll in for their *deontas*. (They don't have to waste petrol in Dr. Hillery country in West Clare; he arranged for the land dole to be sent to Fianna Fail farmers by post! Much more civilised).

IN ALL this am I being vicious? Yes. Vindictive? Yes. Yet do remember the old dictionary definition of a buffalo: "The buffalo is a savage animal — when attacked it defends itself". And Fianna Fail have been attacking the ordinary people of the country since they were launched out of hate and pique by

The Chief. So they'll get no mercy from me, and insofar as their system of bribes is supported by Cosgrave, Corish or Coughlan, *they* won't be out of bounds for me either. The most charitable thing I can say about this last lot is offered by a friend of mine who lectures in the Mathematics Institute of the University of Warwick:

The only ray of hope is that at a time when half the world seems to be run by thugs and the other half by crooks, there may be some virtue in being run by idiots.

MOST REV. Dr. Newman, Bishop of Limerick, has been talking sound commonsense to the Limerickmen's Association in London, telling our exiles to integrate themselves "into the great people of Britain" and "to stop weeping by the waters of Babylon with their faces ever turned to Eire". His Lordship doesn't like cry-babies! Or "bloody awful" countries?

Well, I lived much of my life in Britain and I had little trouble integrating myself. This is not too difficult to accomplish — one just stays away from pubs where the Irish whine together over pints and afternoon drinking clubs where they do likewise. It also involves dissociating oneself from the exiles' expressed hatred of West Indian, Indian, and Pakistani immigrants and other "effing blacks". It is, of course, quite useless pointing out that the coloured exiles are truly British, that the Irish are not and often don't wish to be. But then wherever the Irish have gone they carry their hates with them, religious and ethnic. Who, for instance, opposes the integration of schools in Boston with a homely violence in the streets?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

LIAM FORDE

In his September article, "Lest We Forget", Dermot McEvoy seems to believe that the late Liam Forde was pitch-forked into his fine fisheries job by de Valera. The fact is that Forde, who worked as a clerk at Cleeve's factory up to the "troubles", was appointed manager of the Lax Weir Company just after the establishment of the Free State Government, ten years before de Valera was vested with the power to dole out the cherries and the plums.

With the advent of the Shannon Fisheries Acts (1939), which endowed the Electricity Supply Board with the fishing rights of the Shannon river from Corbally mill dam downstream to the sea, the Lax Weir fishery was given a face lift, and a brand new salmon weir situated below the mouth of the Tailrach, whose powerful stream was far more attractive to travelling fish than the feeble effusion from the main channel at the weir site.

In all, it can be said that Shannon Fisheries was a continuation of the Lax Weir Company: and what could come more naturally to the man with the long black coat than to ensure that one of his civil war officers was not knocked about in his job.

Forde may have had to go through the formality of applying for the managership of the new complex — but in all honesty who else could be expected to secure the appointment only the person who had managed the fisheries successfully for fifteen years?

Though many people could never see eye to eye with Forde's politics, on the river or in the national field, he was a good soldier at a time when good soldiers were very scarce. He was also rather fortunate to survive the war and live to enjoy the sinecure dished up through the influence of the Free State Government in consideration of his work for the volunteers and his prowess in the field against the Black and Tans.

It must be remembered, too, that his selection for this particular job at the time, was primarily prompted by his intimate knowledge of the river, and his flair for salmon fishing and boating.

Surely Dermot McEvoy does not have to proclaim his

The Irish — down to the third generation. Did many hate Jews more than, say, the Limerickmen in 1904 — and who fed that hatred? Did it perhaps begin with the Rev. Fr. Creagh, C.S.S.R? And who opposed it in face of all odds, not excluding Bishop O'Dwyer? A cheeky chappie who edited the *Limerick Leader* by name of Andy McEvoy — and he hasn't any bridge named after him?

All that any exile has to do to integrate is to behave himself and try to be as honest as his hosts. In most respects, the upper-middle and upper class (self-styled) British are just as cruel and unfeeling set of bastards as our *arrivistes* who claim either to be on God's side or that God is on theirs. (I am reminded here of Henry Labouchere's remark that he did not object to Gladstone's always having the ace of trumps up his sleeve, but only to his pretence that God had put it there).

THAT piece I wrote about de Valera last month has been read in Montreal by a scholar and widely-read author, George Rude, Emeritus Professor of History at Concordia University (Get his latest — and best — *Robespierre*. Collins. £4.95). A complete lack of modesty permits me to quote from Professor Rude's letter to me:

I enjoyed the piece very much indeed and I will certainly turn to you for material if I ever have occasion to talk or write about the old rogue.

So there! I shan't after all, disgrace you when I'm integrating with Castletroy; That'll be the day! Meanwhile, shall we d-a-u-n-c-e?

bitterness of heart by quoting from a man's private and confidential application for a job.

He would, however, have been much nearer the mark had he commented on the role played by Forde in conciliating the affections of the Electricity Supply Board by formenting dissension among the Abbey fishermen before they finally split over the financial compensation offer made to them by the E.S.B. in 1936. Liam Forde also distinguished himself in 1953 by being instrumental in introducing sanctions on the Limerick anglers when the simple worm was prohibited for the first time in local waters. But perhaps Dermot McEvoy was not aware of these activities when he wrote his article.

Eamonn O'Brien,
Dooradoyle.

HELD OVER

We regret that owing to pressure of space the second part of "The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany" has been held over until next month.

UNMARRIED MOTHERS — IN GOOD OLD CHRISTIAN CLARE

Brian Merriman's sadness and problems were very much based on his own personal experience, Diarmuid O Muirthe told students at the Merriman School, in Lahinch, Co. Clare. Referring to the theory that Merriman was illegitimate Mr. O Muirthe said that during that period in Co. Clare, the unmarried mother and her baby had a miserable time. The attitude of the people towards the young woman in trouble during the Merriman era was very much the same as it was in 1835, when the first report of the Commissioners for Enquiring into the Conditions of the Poor Classes was compiled. As we are told in the report:

"The unfortunate creatures are first driven from their cabins; then they erect a wretched hovel against some ditch which as soon as it is discovered by the farmer on whose lands it is, is immediately pulled down to prevent the corruption of his children and his servants. She then goes to another place and finds the whole neighbourhood against her. The strain never wears off".

(The "Cork Examiner" 1/9/1975).

THE CHURCH

BY JOHN CASEY

Anyone who does any thinking on the subject comes quickly to realise that the most powerful organisation in Southern Ireland is the Roman Catholic Church. It controls almost totally primary and secondary education. The manager of the national school, is the parish priest or his nominee and the manager has hiring and firing powers. The primary teacher has traditionally been a servant of the clerics – in some places spinster teachers actually being the priest's housekeeper.

The I.N.T.O. has traditionally been dominated by priest lovers. The present national executive tried to force the members to accept the original proposals for boards of management but the proposals were so insulting that even docile teachers found them sticking in their craws and the executive of the union had to ask the hierarchy to modify them. The final proposals agreed on and now being implemented are an improvement on the originals but are still an insult to democracy, to parents and teachers, the boards being completely clerically dominated. There are of course individual teachers, rebels, who have resented and resisted clerical rule but they are a minority.

Most secondary schools are directly controlled, owned and staffed by religious orders. An interesting development here is that because of a drop in vocations they are no longer able to staff the school with religious. In many of them the number of lay teachers outnumber the religious; they have, however, maintained control – the principal always being a member of the order. They have even closed down schools in an attempt to consolidate and concentrate their power. Vocational schools are nominally non-denominational but one will generally find a cleric on the V.E.C. committee and priests are brought in to teach Christian (Roman Catholic) doctrine. They are not unduly worried about the "techs" because they believe (rightly) that the secondary schools get the intellectual cream and they therefore will continue to brainwash the country's future rulers.

At third level, they control teacher training, something of obvious importance, and they try to fill as many posts in the N.U.I. colleges as they can. Here again, they like to hold the Education Faculty – the professors of Education in V.C.G. and U.C.D. are both clerics. Dr. Cregan in U.C.D. being, to put it mildly, a man of advanced years and of decidedly mediocre talent.

Their determination to control education is obvious and understandable. Cardinal Conway, in spite of the sectarian holocaust in Northern Ireland has continually refused to sanction multi – (or non) denominational schools. Sectarian education is a major factor in the tribal war in the North, but the hierarchy, would prefer to see the blood flow than to loosen their grip on the schools. To hold on to the schools is important because, with the exception of the church, they are the only indoctrination channels completely under their control. And, of course, they have never underestimated the importance of this control. "Give us the child" says the Jesuits, and we'll answer for the man".

But, in spite of their total blanket control, they are worried. They cannot control the media which over a period has been disseminating ideas intrinsically hostile to Church teaching. The Church is in trouble. Over the years, it has operated on the pyramid-hierarchical basis. The Pope was at the top; the man in the street knew his place; no questions were asked. It ruled autocratically using fear, superstition, ignorance and a mawkish home-cooked Christianity, to keep the people in line. After all, up to the sixties, priests were chasing and harassing courting couples. The young, however,

will no longer buy the hotch-potch of outlandish beliefs, superstition and fanaticism.

As one would expect, those most out of sympathy with the Church are the new bourgeoisie and the urban worker. The rich new middle-class are hedonistic and materialistic. They want the "good life": food and drink, booze and sex. They spend more time dreaming of laying the neighbour's wife than they do with their heads. They take their values via T.V. from capitalist Britain and the United States. Because of the failure of the socialist leaders and parties, many of the working class pursue the materialistic gods of the *nouveau riche* and they spend their time and money (when they have any) on the discos, cabarets and dolly girls. For them the Church and its teaching are irrelevant.

The more astute members of the hierarchy have noted this. Dr. Philbin and Dr. Lucey live in the nineteenth century but there are others, who though just as conservative, pose as liberals and progressives and try to float on the mainstream. Of these, the Bishop of Kerry Dr. Casey is an interesting example. He smokes, drinks, swears, sings, drives a fast car and poses as a progressive. He is, of course, a thorough conservative, trying to regain lost ground for a decrepit church. One of his schemes is an organisation called F.L.Y., which is supposedly to give young people a zest for of all things. "Free Life"! (Since when in the name of God did the church every worry about the freedom of its members with its encyclicals and its long lists of "do's and don'ts") The real purpose of the organisation, like the Hitler Youth and other fascist youth organisations, is to bind the young to its founder and his ideology. Casey is trying to give the Church a new image and museum pieces like Lucey are as embarrassing to him, as they are to the liberal-progressive politicians, who, like him, want to give an impression of change without any real change.

The clerical interference in, and the power they exercise over, politics is also interesting. No rural T.D. could, even today, directly oppose them on an important issue and hope to be returned at the next election. Amongst Dail politicians, the only consistent and fearless opponent of Church involvement in politics has been Dr. Noel Browne and he, of course, has always represented an urban constituency. Cruise O'Brien has indicated that he is not a great admirer of Mother Church but, again, O'Brien represents Dublin North-East – his supporters being the 'liberated' middle-class types and urban workers. There are those like Stevie Coughlan who prostitute themselves at the Church door for power. Some of the young breed, like Gerry Collins and Des O'Malley, would like to cock their snook but they don't have the political or moral guts. And a large number of the old politicians actually believe the gobbledegook. Cosgrave may have voted against the Pill bill in fear of hell fire; he may also have got a few notes from archbishops, heads of confraternities and Knights of Columbanus.

The Church is chameleon. It supported O'Connell and Catholic Emancipation because it was in its interest, hounded Parnell on the Kitty O'Shea affair, opposed Sinn Fein (the Vatican opposed democratic republics until Leo XIII saw this was a lost cause), opposed and excommunicated nationalist guerillas in the Independence War (so-called) but quickly rowed in behind when the State was established. It was suspicious of de Valera – until he had kissed enough rings. It hounded socialists and communists. Charlie Gilmore was kicked and beaten by a mob of thugs demanding to see his scapulars – Gilmore being a Protestant.

In 1950, the "Catholic Standard", under Peadar Ward,

began a campaign of political persecution against the Irish Workers' League. Photos of members with their addresses and occupations appeared on the front page. This was intended to incite, which undoubtedly it did, leading to harassment of members of the League and in some cases loss of jobs. Perhaps the most bizarre case of political persecution was the Gralton case of 1933. Jim Gralton, a veteran of the Independence and Civil Wars, an organiser of Quill's Transport Union in New York, returned to his native Leitrim in 1932, and became politically active, organising classes on Marxism and Connolly socialism. The local parish priest, aided by the bishop and the local Fianna Fail T.D., got an order for his deportation. He was deported from Cobh, the ticket bought with his own money. In August 1933 when Mick O'Riordan went forward as a candidate in the general election of 1951, Archbishop McQuaid had a letter read at all Masses stating that it would be a mortal sin to vote for him. Indeed, it was only in 1969 that

they last resurrected the red scare when the Fianna Fail gombeen men, egged on by the clerics, warned rural Ireland against red revolutionaries like Conor Cruise O'Brien and David Thornley.

The Catholic Church is, historically speaking, a relatively new element in Irish politics. It only became a power at the beginning of the last century. A study of its influence has been made by an American, Payl Blanchard, in a book, "The Irish and Catholic Power". This work is not widely known, nor indeed will the Church encourage such studies. However, the role of the Church in politics has to be brought out and exposed: for too long the hierarchy have plotted and conspired in the secrecy and silence of Maynooth. The people whose lives and future they have shaped and moulded are blind to and ignorant of their wheeling and dealing with the capitalists and the gombeen politicians. It is time that they should see how the Church manipulates them politically.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A reply to the above letter will be published in our next edition.

SOCIALISM V STALINISM

Nowhere was the ambivalence which has characterised the attitude of would-be Marxists the world over towards the neo-Stalinist dictatorship at present in control of the Soviet Union so clearly brought home to me as in an article in your September edition captioned "Reply to Tom Morris".

Your correspondent's dismissal of what he euphemistically refers to as "the shortcomings of the Soviet system" as being of "dubious relevance" to the present situation in Ireland in itself bears ample testimony to the fact that Marxism, if it is to survive as a genuinely revolutionary ideology, can no longer be left to the so-called Marxists who have, over the past half-century, allowed it to degenerate into an almost catechetical defence of Stalinist perversion.

Such ambivalence may have been forgivable in the past: at a time when the Soviet government represented the only revolutionary state-power in the world it was, indeed, only natural that all truly progressive-forces the world over should look on the Bolsheviks as the natural leaders of the international Communist movement, and, just as in the past all roads led to Rome, now all roads were thought to lead to and from Moscow. Such an attitude is, however, untenable at present. The great light of the October Revolution has long since petered out and, far from being the leader of world revolution, the Soviet government has, over the past half-century, consistently shown itself to have betrayed the very essence of Marxist-Leninist thought. Indeed, so firmly has this dogmatic perversion of the fundamental principles of socialism become entrenched in the Russian psyche that it can be truly said that the Soviet rulers have to all intents and purposes, institutionalised the counter-revolution and, far from being the vanguard of the proletarian cause, now constitute the only genuinely reactionary force on earth.

If in the past the Soviet leadership sought to defend its policy of ruthless suppression of the creative initiative of the masses — a creativity which ought to be the very hallmark of a socialist society — by pointing to the vulnerability of the Soviet Union encircled, as it was, by imperialistic capitalism, such an argument loses whatever validity it might once have had when one considers the profound changes which the world has undergone in the post-war era. The heroic Chinese Communist Revolution alone should serve as sufficient vindication of the claim that the great progress of the proletarian cause in the present century is, indeed, irreversible. This view is further attested to by recent events in South-East Asia where even the most belligerent warmongers of American capital were exposed before the peoples of the world for what

they nakedly are — veritable paper tigers. So impressive and final has been the victory of the Vietnamese people that it can be claimed, without fear of reasoned contradiction, that we are at present witnessing, before our very eyes the death-throes of Yankee imperialism.

The crisis of this, the last quarter of the twentieth century is, therefore, not so much the crisis of capitalism as the crisis of the world communist movement itself. The Sino-Soviet split, the Russian suppression of the Czechoslovak Communist Party's project for the "renewal of socialism" and, more recently, the failure of the Portuguese Communist Party to win the support of all but a small section of the people even in a revolutionary situation, are all obvious manifestations of the cancer which has gripped international Communism — a cancer which has its roots solely and exclusively in our failure to exorcise completely the ghost of Stalin which still haunts the world long after the Twentieth Party Congress first denounced his degeneracy.

It would seem self-evident then that the time has come for an end to dictatorship in the socialist countries. The true meaning and ultimate vindication of socialism is the liberation of the worker from the manifold alienations which have heretofore enslaved him. The basic error of Stalin, in this respect, consisted in his thinking that socialism is something which can be dictated to the worker from above. Lenin, on the other hand, had no such illusions. "Socialism", he wrote "cannot come into being through orders given from above. It is foreign to official and bureaucrat automatism. Living, creative socialism is the work of the creative masses themselves". Anything short of this is alien to the very essence of Marxist-Leninist theory, and serves only the cause of reaction.

George McLoughlin,
Limerick.

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THE BLACK AND TANS

The Black and Tans always acted in an intelligent manner - to cause the maximum of terror with the minimum of effort. One arch of Annacotty Bridge near the city was blown up to prevent the movement of British forces across the Mulcair River. The following morning the Tans arrived at the local creamery where the farmers were delivering milk. They collected all the men within a mile of the place and compelled them to tear down nearby stone walls and fill in the broken arch with stones and rubble. When at the end of the day the work was finished and the bridge usable again, the labourers were dismissed with gunfire and ashplants. Annacotty Bridge was not blown up again until July 1922 when the Tans had left the country.

While the military in the four barracks were content to blow up houses with explosives, they always acted in an orderly manner. They first removed the tenants from the selected house, and the nearby houses, then placing the explosive in the best engineering manner, up went the house and its contents. In this manner four houses were demolished in the city. On the other hand, the Tans loved a blazing fire. When given a box of matches and a tin of petrol by their officer they needed no further instructions. They burned down four houses deliberately and two more by accident. The Tans were not concerned whether the tenants remained in the building or not.

Several Companies of Gordon Highlanders and Welsh Fusiliers occupied the four military barracks, they also had barricaded posts on every road leading out of the city. When a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the city and country generally, patrols of those men walked the streets, while other patrols on bicycles moved silently around the city and country. Because of the silent movements of those cycle patrols, many people were caught out during curfew; they were held until a lorry or foot patrol arrived and took them to the nearest barracks for questioning. When a Welsh Fusilier was punched in a public house, a company of men from the New Barracks cordoned off the street and burned the pub, but the customers were allowed to finish their drinks and have a last free drink "on the house". Eventually a curfew was imposed from 4.30 in the evening until 7 next morning. During those fourteen hours of the twenty-four, lorries careered around the city and patrols played havoc searching houses, insulting and injuring the occupants.

In its own modest little way the Tan terror was memorable and had its many tales of cowardice and bravery, of skullduggery and knavery. The greatest heroes of those years were the Plenipotentiaries, the representatives and the Delegates from Mother Ireland who bravely endured a terrible risk for the Motherland. Ere the Tans war started, those wandering Minstrel Boys, armed with British and American passports, sped from the Country to far foreign climes to represent the country as Ambassadors and delegates of a non-existent Republic. Had any of those delegates entered any country as illegal immigrants without passports they would have been deported.

In Europe those delegates were to be seen in Paris, Geneva and perhaps in Istanbul. On the Continent of America, they were seen and loudly heard in the cities and towns of the U.S.A. They lived and travelled like Caliphs of Baghdad on a magic carpet of almighty American dollars. They enjoyed the delights of public ovation and the pleasures of the table. All of those delights were paid for by Clan na nGael and other Irish American Organisations in the U.S.A. to the tune of over a hundred thousand American dollars.

While the Tan terror raged in Ireland, those delegates also endured their moiety of terror. The great fear of their lives was

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

that because of some indiscreet word or act they might be deported back to Ireland to endure the horrors of the Tan terror.

THE TRUCE AND TREATY

Like golden voiced cuckoos in the springtime of another year, those delegates returned to Ireland for the Truce and Treaty debates, but the songs of the cuckoos had become the croak of the ravens. Whether in the wilds of Connemara or on Cuchulainn in the G.P.O., the ravens are birds of ill omen in Irish history. The most rabid opponents of the Treaty were those returned exiles, they were rigid and inflexible in their insistence that the Treaty be rejected and that the country should continue to fight for an all green Republic. Because of their long absence from the country they seemed to be unaware that a six-county Government with an elected Parliament was in existence in the North-east. This was to be a "Protestant home for a Protestant people" who had the will and the means to keep it so.

Such, then, was the background scene when Michael O'Callaghan, Mayor of Limerick, unable to obtain a passport to leave the country, was smuggled across the Atlantic in a coal-boat as a stowaway to Canada. Because of the British censorship of events in Ireland, and disbelief in the stories of horror and terror which leaked out, it was felt that the 750th Mayor of Limerick was a voice to be heard and to be believed.

On his arrival at the United States Canadian border he was arrested and had to fight in the courts against the combined opposition of the U.S. and Canadian immigration officials.

He managed, however, to give a short interview to U.S. and Canadian journalists and was then deported back to Ireland. On his arrival home he was shot dead inside his own door at midnight, his wife being a witness of the murder. On the same night the previous Mayor, George Clancy, was shot dead in his home and a school teacher Volunteer O'Donoghue was also murdered. Those murders were committed by a sergeant of the R.I.C. with some Auxies and Tans who riddled the bodies with bullets.

Following these events, the British Prime Minister, the adulterous David Lloyd George, assured a startled British House of Commons that he "had murder by the throat".

THE ARRIVAL OF THE GUARDS

In January 1923 the first detachment of an unarmed police force, the Civic Guards, arrived in the city. The Guards took over the several police barracks which had been closed since August 1922. The Courthouse was opened by the newly created office of District Justice. The District Justice with the assistance of the Guards administered Civil law according to the Constitution of the Irish Free State. That Constitution was non-sectarian, giving no preference or favour to any Church or creed. Neither bishop, priest, minister or presbyter enjoyed any "Special position" in that document.

Over one hundred civil war prisoners in the city jail were removed to the Curragh internment camp. The jail was now under civil control. The prisoners were removed by rail, as the railways were again in working order with trains running to a timetable. Most of the rail and road bridges in the county and

in the country had temporary repairs made to them and had been usable for some time. In Limerick city, the four symbols of law and order, the police, the courts, the jail, and the Custom House, were functioning peacefully.

In March 1923, a special effort was made by the Staters to capture the leaders and provocateurs of the rebellion against the State. Those men had allotted themselves such titles as "General", "Brigadier", "Commandant", and were sending out despatches and communiques to non-existent brigades. From those despatches, it seemed that a brigade of men were located in the Knockmealdown mountains, and would put up a fierce resistance. Almost two thousand Staters were sent against them. In the event, no fierce battle ensued. On sighting the Staters, those leaders raced across the fields to avoid capture. Two shots were fired and one man was wounded; he died later. As so many men had been executed for opposition to the

State, it was expected that those leaders would likewise be executed. Nothing of the kind happened. The leaders issued a final communique to all their followers still at liberty, to cease all hostile acts against the State. They were given their lives and liberty, while several more of their unfortunate followers were executed. It seems that it is better to be a leader than a follower.

(To be continued).

THE WET-TIME RACKET

"Wet-Time" cards are familiar to all those who are employed in the building industry or in other outdoor work. Previously employers did not pay their men for time lost because of bad weather conditions. The Wet-Time insurance system was designed, therefore, to give workers some compensation for their loss of earnings. However, for many years now, many employers, because of trade union pressure, have been paying workers in full for time lost and consequently the Wet-Time system has lost its original purpose.

But the Wet-Time system still exists but the compensation is now kept by the employer while he pays his workers the full rate. All very fair, but there is one very large loop-hole in the system. It is very difficult to establish whether or not the employers claims for compensation are bona-fide. It is very difficult to prove or disprove that work has actually been interrupted by rain especially because the Government employs no inspectors for the purpose of checking compensation claims. Weather diaries are kept, but these, of course, can only record whether or not it was raining or snowing on a particular day. Special inspectors are necessary to determine whether or not claims are bona-fide and that work was actually called to a halt by inclement weather. The result of all this is that as long as it is raining, the employer is free to claim and collect compensation and his word has to be taken on the matter.

Many building workers and asphalt layers are often provided with oilskins by their employers, to enable work to be carried on in all but the very worst of weather. But for each hour of rain and for each man employed out of doors, the employer is free to claim compensation under the system as it is at present organised. If the claims are false it cannot be proved easily that this is so.

It is considered too expensive to employ special inspectors to monitor the activities of building or asphalt contractors on rainy days. But perhaps it is time to abolish this archaic system of Wet-Time insurance. Working conditions have improved over the years and so have building techniques, which are now not nearly as affected by the weather as they used to be. And it is about time the building trade unions demanded a guaranteed week of 40 hours for all building workers. This would then put the onus on the building contractors to plan and carry out their contracts in a more efficient and responsible manner.

Family Planning Developments

The first move towards the establishment of a family planning clinic in Limerick was made on the 20th June of this year. On that evening, a public meeting was held at the Royal George Hotel and was addressed by three speakers from the Irish Family Planning Association: Dr. George Henry, Mrs. Laurine Elliott and Dr. Walter Prenderville.

That an increasing number of Limerick people are demanding full access to family planning facilities, was shown by the attendance of over seventy people. This number was equally divided between men and women. The meeting went on for over two and a half hours and all the speakers from the floor, with two exceptions, spoke in favour of family planning.

The meeting called for the establishment of a family planning clinic in Limerick as an immediate priority. A circular passed around the attendance was signed by forty-six people, who pledged their active support in the setting up and operation of the clinic. Ten other people have also come forward since the meeting was held to offer their help for the venture.

Apart from the encouraging response to the public meeting, the demand for family planning facilities has also manifested itself in other ways in Limerick. More women continue to avail of the pill and other contraceptive devices, while men are using contraceptives in increasing numbers. The work and experience of the family planning centre at the National Institute of Higher Education at Plassey House, Limerick, have provided a useful guide for local people. Many students and lecturers from the Institute attended the public meeting and offered their help and experience in getting the Limerick clinic off the ground.

Many Limerick people already write regularly to the Dublin clinics for advice and contraceptive supplies; others have visited the clinics to avail of the services. Earlier this year, the Southill Tenants' Association, the largest and most active group of its kind in the city, called for the availability of contraceptive facilities for people in its area and in Limerick generally.

An early meeting of all those interested in establishing the clinic in Limerick has been arranged for October 18th. The two main items on the agenda of this meeting are the need to secure a suitable central premises for the location of the clinic and the appointment of a gynaecologist. The members of the medical profession in Limerick have a reputation for conservatism, but this image too is changing and some young doctors have already begun to show an interest in the proposal to set up the clinic. Margaret Bolt of the Family Planning Services has been invited to attend this meeting and her knowledge and experience should prove an invaluable asset to the local people in the work of setting up the clinic and in providing the necessary facilities. So with this progress, it should not be long before the people of Limerick have their own clinic in operation in the city.

THE PARISH PUMP

PART SEVEN

THE ABBEY FISHERMEN

The most famous body of Limerick men ever to fish the Shannon river were the Abbey fishermen. (The name "Abbey" is an abbreviation of the name Saint Francis Abbey, a monastery founded by the Franciscan friars in the thirteenth century and around which the fishermen's houses clustered. The tributary bounding the King's Island on the Irishtown side is named the Abbey river). Like the pig-buyers, the packet-and-tripe makers and the sandmen, the fishermen lived on the King's Island and formed their own distinct and tightly-knit community.

But, unlike the other groups, the Abbey fishermen were fortunate enough to have their history recorded in written form. About thirteen years ago, the story of the age-old struggles of the fishermen against water, weather and the harassment of their wealthy, more powerful fellow-men was written and published by William Lysaght. The book, "The Abbey Fishermen", recounts their history in an interesting and exciting manner and the work is a valuable contribution to local history. (The book was entirely sold out within a short time of its publication and is now regarded in Limerick as a collector's item).

But William Lysaght was not the only writer to concern himself with the troubled waters of the Shannon at Limerick and the legal and physical battles fought in and out of the river. Over a hundred years ago, Michael Hogan, the Bard of Thomond, in his poem, "The Lament of the Shannon", describes the attempts then being made by some of the "proud monopolists" to "covet this great public right" to fish and to grasp "those river-gifts which God to his poor children sent". Hogan, a keen fisherman himself, wrote the poem as an attack on the "wretches" who had secured the fishing rights of lucrative stretches of the river, and as a vindication of the right of the people to fish its waters. The poem also serves as a commentary on the vicissitudes and difficulties of the fishermen's lives and as an epitaph in their final confrontation with the Electricity Supply Board.

*The sordid few whose barren gold,
Could thus a nation's hands employ,
Like greedy otters watch, and war,
About my fish and timid fry!
The cormorants that haunt my flood,
Are less voracious for their prey,
Than those insatiate human-sharks
That watch my current, night and day!*

*From court to court my name is dragg'd,
As if I were a felon base;
My strands surveyed – my bounds explored –
With spies around in every place!
Would! that the burning beam of heaven
Had scorched my shores and drunk my waves,
Ere I had fallen in the hands
Of such remorseless, legal knaves!*

*God stored my stream with finny wealth,
And boundless is his bounty there –
From year to year 'tis well supplied,
For all his poor to have a share!
But proud monopolists now claim,
And covet this great public right,
And use a ruthless robber-law
To sanctify their lawless might!*

*My curdy salmon, trout, and peal,
These 'human otters' grasp them all,
While, with their prying eyes of cranes,
Their slunkies watch from Fall to Fall;
And yonder live their 'water-hounds' –
With monster fish-traps at their door –
Wretches who fatten on the wrongs,
And persecutions of God's poor!*

*No fisherman dares throw a line,
For sport or profit, in my stream,*

*Else hard imprisonment or fine
Would follow fast his angling game.
And even thou, my favourite bard! –
That sang the glories of my tide:
With rod in hand, and cheerful lay –
I miss thee from my flowery side!*

In his book, William Lysaght proved himself to be a sympathetic historian of the men who fished the Shannon from "time immemorial". In his Introduction, he modestly proclaims his qualifications and his reasons for embarking on the task of writing the history:

In this book I have attempted, as best I can, to record the turbulent history of the Abbey fishermen, thus preserving what may in the future be a small contribution to Irish folklore. I am neither a writer nor an historian. My excuse for trespassing in fields not my own is that I hold that the Abbey fishermen were flagrantly deprived of their birthright. My only qualifications for a work of this nature are a knowledge of the river, a little snap-netting experience and a desire to expose the wrongs perpetrated in the name of progress. There are bound to be gaps in this work, as the fishermen kept no written records of any description until 1903. In fact, the absence of records militated against them in their claim for compensation against the Electricity Supply Board. The field of research, then, is very limited. The reader will notice that the Lax Weir at Corbally keeps cropping up; this is unavoidable, as the history of the fishermen goes hand in hand with that of the Lax Weir.

In the first page of the book William Lysaght takes issue with Robert Herbert, the former city librarian, who had written that "the Abbey fishermen were part of the small colony of Park on the outskirts of the city and there was a tradition that the Park people were descendants of the Danes .. their sallowness of complexion and strangeness of manner would lead one to place some credence to this strange tradition". Lysaght disagrees with this assertion and states:

I know Park people and fishermen and, rather than being sallow in complexion, I would describe them as being ruddy complexioned. As for strangeness of manner, I never experienced it. The Park people keep a bit to themselves but this is unavoidable, as they are off the beaten track and have no common interest with their neighbours, being a market-gardening community. It is very likely that some of the fisher families resided in Park before the district called the Abbey was reclaimed and built up, Park being at one time the only high ground outside the city proper before the Shannon and Abbey rivers were walled in. Old maps show the confluence of these rivers as one vast tidal expanse of slobland. In fact, the Abbey district to where the fishermen seem to have moved from Park was part of this slobland .. The reason for the drift from Park to the Abbey district was because, as industries grew up in the city, the fishermen found employment there in the off-season .. I contend that the fishermen were of pure Irish stock. What else would the names – Clancy, Hayes, Shanny, McNamara, Cherry O'Dwyer, Lyddy, Hartigan, O'Connor and Carroll – suggest?

Many Limerick people will question William Lysaght's conclusion about the absence of Danish influences in Park. And he must surely have had his tongue firmly pinned in his cheek when he so airily dismissed the suggestion of the Park people's strangeness of manner. But when he speaks about the drift of the fishermen to the Abbey, Lysaght seems to be on surer grounds. One well-known and long-tailed family, however, the Shannys, remained in Park where they combined their skills as market-gardeners and fishermen.

(To be continued).